

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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STILWELL BILL SEEKS REINSTATEMENT OF LIFETIME HUNTING LICENSES

INDIANAPOLIS – State Rep. Russ Stilwell (D-Boonville) announced today that he has filed legislation that would restore the lifetime hunting, fishing and trapping licenses that the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) stopped issuing earlier this year.

House Bill 1039, eligible for consideration by the 2006 Indiana General Assembly, would reverse a provision contained in an act endorsed by the DNR that was approved this year by the Legislature.

"The DNR has claimed that the lifetime licenses needed to be stopped because they created a huge financial burden on the agency's budget," Stilwell said. "However, rather than look into ways to ensure that funding from the sales of these licenses goes toward programs such as fish and wildlife and law enforcement, they chose to eliminate the program. I don't believe that many lawmakers were aware that this language was in the bill that became law."

While existing lifetime licenses remain in effect, no new lifetime licenses were issued after June 30, 2005. Stilwell said the DNR did not do a very good job of publicizing the change.

"Many parents liked to give these lifetime licenses as a gift to their children before the start of hunting season in the fall," Stilwell said. "A lot of people simply did not find out that lifetime licenses didn't exist any more until they tried to apply for them. Many of them contacted my office, and asked if there was something that the Legislature could do about it."

If the proposal becomes law, residents would be able to purchase lifetime licenses for an amount equal to 20 times the fee charges for a yearly license.

Stilwell felt the measure would attract interest from both parties because of the Legislature's long history of supporting Hoosiers who engage in outdoor sports throughout the year.

"Right now, the Indiana General Assembly is in the process of considering an amendment to our state constitution that would guarantee the rights of Hoosiers to hunt, fish and harvest game," said Stilwell, referring to a House Joint Resolution that needs to be approved by the Legislature in either 2007 or 2008, then passed in a statewide referendum before going into the Constitution.

"It doesn't make sense to me that we would amend our constitution to ensure that people can hunt, then turn around and deprive them of the right to have a license that enables them to hunt for the rest of their lives," he continued. "I'm betting my colleagues will feel the same way."

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This news release can be accessed on the Internet at www.IN.gov/H74